



Matching and Adapting Youthquake Curriculum for TurnUp's Training Program

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Executive Summary

TurnUp is an organization that focuses on empowering and connecting young activists through their training program and social networking application. Throughout my internship, I contributed to TurnUp as a general intern as well as a co-team leader. I performed weekly tasks exploring the impact of various topics on young people, engaging in grassroots activism, and working with my team members. The objective of my business project was to work with a curriculum presented to TurnUp by YouthQuake, an organization dedicated to educating students through an action civics program. I was tasked with matching and adapting the YouthQuake curriculum to suit the TurnUp training program and TurnUp's mission and values. I analyzed the YouthQuake curriculum, gauged suitability to the TurnUp training program, and developed task sheets for future implementation. Finally, I surveyed the TurnUp community to gain a general response to the adapted curriculum. Based on the feedback from the TurnUp community, those surveyed found the proposed curriculum to be engaging and have value. Feedback responses also included general comments and suggestions for boosting engagement, improving clarity and organization, and possible concerns. Throughout my internship, I developed a deeper understanding of TurnUp and learned how to create an effective and engaging activism-related curriculum.

Business Context

TurnUp is a non-profit organization and application dedicated to promoting activism and connecting young activists. TurnUp is committed to inspiring young people and providing activists with education and organization tools needed to drive change. TurnUp houses several teams dedicated to marketing, performing social activism tasks, and expanding the organization's outreach. In addition, TurnUp runs a social networking application designed to allow users to engage in activism through local civic engagement opportunities, informational resources, and features for connecting with organizations and other activists.

As an intern, I committed as a general team member and co-team leader where I performed weekly tasks and attended speaker events regarding activism. Weekly tasks focused on issues such as voter suppression and equipping interns with resources to develop as activists. As an intern, I built skills such as conducting research, writing reports, communicating and collaborating with my team members, and outreach. Additionally, weekly assignments included partaking in grassroots activism activities such as volunteer opportunities or attending educational events. Through the grassroots activism tasks, I had the chance to connect with social movement organizers outside of TurnUp.

Business Project Description

Amidst the pandemic and a climate of social injustice, TurnUp began a remote training program for the organization's youth interns and volunteers. Within the program, members work in teams and participate in collaborative and independent work centered around enhancing democratic competency and civic engagement abilities. Program participants consistently meet with their team and are required to complete weekly tasks regarding youth activism. Weekly responsibilities include activism-related research and writing, participating in activism events, working on projects, performing outreach, advancing the TurnUp app, and beyond. Currently, TurnUp's training program has been extremely impactful. TurnUp hopes that the second year of the program will continue to help youth activists make a difference. Additionally, the training program is constantly changing in response to an evolving social climate.

Youthquake is an organization dedicated to bringing together middle and high school students through an educational action civics program. Youthquake had reached out to TurnUp regarding the possible implementation of Youthquake's curriculum modules into the TurnUp training program and weekly task system. My business research project focuses on researching TurnUp and Youthquake to see where TurnUp may introduce Youthquake's curriculum into their program. Throughout my internship, I had the opportunity to partake in TurnUp's training program and conduct further research.

The activities and tasks I have been working on surround reading and analyzing the YouthQuake curriculum and developing task sheets detailing the proposed curriculum. I identified possible modules for future implementation into TurnUp's training program, accounting for suitability to the structure of TurnUp's intern/volunteer program and alignment with TurnUp's goals and values. Additionally, I implemented several adjustments to the YouthQuake Curriculum. Initially, the original YouthQuake curriculum depended on having a teacher figure to guide the lessons and activities. However, TurnUp's training program follows a structure of teams and team leaders that meet weekly or bi-weekly and work individually. At Turnup, teams are encouraged to work together on research projects and occasionally meet and brainstorm during team meetings. In addition, team leaders at TurnUp often are not able to facilitate entire lesson plans. I adapted the curriculum by individualizing the lesson plans and activities, taking into account the team structure of TurnUp's training program. I also revised modules to include individual tasks that can be collaborative and worked on as a team. Additionally, I attended weekly meetings for my internship with my team leaders, as well as meetings with Dr. Nancy Shapiro, my business mentor, and Rachna Shah, founder of YouthQuake, where I discussed my project and the future relationship between the two organizations. After researching and presenting possible curriculum implementations, I surveyed the TurnUp community regarding the possible additions to the training program.

Business Project Research

During my experience at TurnUp, I focused on researching and investigating two questions - How can I identify, match, and adapt the YouthQuake curriculum to fit within the TurnUp Training Program, and how will the TurnUp Community respond to the proposed curriculum?

To answer these questions, I have mainly utilized information provided by my business mentor and the organizations, TurnUp and Youthquake. I focused on exploring the values of both organizations, and I had the opportunity to access resources such as details about the structure of the TurnUp training program and testimonies from past interns provided by my mentor. My mentor and the founder of YouthQuake have provided me with essential information regarding their organizations and what they would like to see within my project. I have additionally utilized both the TurnUp and Youthquake websites, which state their missions and values. My experience as an intern in the training program has also further solidified my understanding of TurnUp's structure and values. Experiencing the training program myself has helped me relate to the experiences of other interns, which I have applied when analyzing and adapting a curriculum for TurnUp. However, experiencing the training program does not expose many logistical components of implementing a curriculum into the training program. To gauge the feasibility of the final curriculum, the TurnUp community provided me with feedback regarding how engaging they felt the curriculum would be, how well the curriculum aligns with TurnUp's values and possible challenges within the curriculum.

Adapting the curriculum to suit the structure and needs of the TurnUp Training Program also presented several limitations and challenges. The original YouthQuake curriculum was heavily teacher-facing rather than student-facing, as the curriculum was dependent on having a teacher facilitating the content. The original curriculum also built upon each lesson. However, interns and volunteers are often completing or just starting their experience at TurnUp at different times. So, the curriculum had to be adapted to suit an intern or volunteer joining or leaving. The curriculum also targeted 9th and 10th graders as its target audience. However, TurnUp engages a broader range of young interns and volunteers, who often have more experience with civic engagement and would most likely be familiar with the basic level information presented within the original curriculum. The length of the tasks also had to be accommodating for each intern or volunteer's committed hours, as they could vary from 5 hours to more than 20 hours a week. Portions of the original curriculum were either omitted or adapted to include individual research and engagement with the opportunity for team collaboration to account for these challenges.

After matching and adapting the YouthQuake lesson plans, I surveyed the TurnUp community to gauge a general response to the proposed adaptations. The survey asked current interns and volunteers partaking in the TurnUp training program to rank, on a scale of 1-5, how engaging they found the curriculum, how suitable the curriculum is for TurnUp's structure, and if and where they saw value in the curriculum. The survey also included questions asking if there were any foreseeable problems or issues and if they had any suggestions for improvement.

Key Project Learnings and Recommendations

After finalizing the matched and adapted curriculum and receiving feedback from the TurnUp community, my key learnings surrounded how to develop an effective curriculum and, specifically, a curriculum tailored to TurnUp's structure, missions, and values. The curriculum that allowed interns and volunteers to explore their passions was found to be more engaging, as those surveyed found that when people can research, write, and communicate something they're personally interested in, they'll often complete the assigned task more adequately. Additionally, those surveyed found value within module tasks that called for interns and volunteers to interact with their local government as it encouraged action and provided a mix of research, writing, and communication. Current TurnUp interns and volunteers surveyed also gave constructive feedback aimed at improving the proposed curriculum. Foreseen problems or issues included possible disorganization due to research-heavy components, a need for further clarification within specific instructions, and possible challenges when communicating with outside organizations.

Through my internship, I have also developed a deeper understanding of thinking creatively and analytically to adapt and change a curriculum to suit a different structure and set of values. I have learned the importance of constant communication and asking questions while acting as a bridge between TurnUp and an outside organization, YouthQuake. Additionally, I have learned how to develop an engaging curriculum geared towards supporting and providing young activists with resources to become more proactive.

My internship at TurnUp has been extremely rewarding, as I had the opportunity to develop a unique project and work with a standout group. My main recommendation to leave with my mentor would be to incorporate further engagement with the TurnUp community. Throughout my project, I mainly focused on collaborating with my mentor and other leaders at TurnUp. However, as my project impacts the interns of TurnUp the greatest, additional opportunities to interact with community members would aid in understanding their perspectives on the TurnUp training program. Moving forward, I hope my work at TurnUp can be of benefit to the program as it continues to grow and evolve.

References

TurnUp Activism - <https://www.turnup.us/>

TurnUp's Website details its history, values, and mission. TurnUp aims to boost voter turnout, empower young people to drive change, and provide a platform for organizations and individual activists to collaborate. TurnUp emphasizes the importance of effective communication, staying connected, and being proactive.

YouthQuake - <https://youthquake.me/>

Youthquake's website explains its mission and approach to achieving its goals. Youthquake is dedicated to bridging the growing political divide and polarization that America currently faces. Youthquake aims to bridge liberal and conservative students through an engaging curriculum with community perspectives that follows an innovative design thinking approach.

Charla Agnoletti, Erik Jansen, et al. "Youth-Led Activism Is Key to Building a Better World." *Teach For America*, 25 Jan. 2021, www.teachforamerica.org/one-day/opinion/youth-led-activism-is-key-to-building-a-better-world.


Charla Agnoletti, the program director for Public Achievement in the School of Education at the University of Colorado, expresses the impact of youth activism. She writes about the critical role young people play in building change, especially across digital platforms. Agnoletti tells her firsthand recounts of young people facilitating change amidst a pandemic through screens and social networking platforms.

Brandt, Christen, and Tammy Tibbetts. "How to Be an Activist for Causes You Believe In." *NBCNews.com*, NBCUniversal News Group, 15 Jan. 2018, www.nbcnews.com/better/pop-culture/7-ways-be-better-activist-ncna791856.

This source focuses on developing as an activist and draws from the insight of several different experts. Katie Riley, Programs Manager of She's the First, stresses that a key component of effective activism is understanding the issues at hand. Staying educated and having the ability to apply that knowledge to your activism and community is essential for driving change. Nelli V. Agbulos, Co-Founder of ARTivism Galleries, also emphasizes education and states that "a true activist is always striving to learn and understand more, as the world continues to change."

Appendices

Task Sheet Example:

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Lesson One YouthQuake x TurnUp Task

Task Developed in Collaboration with YouthQuake

TASKS:
This week you will be working on:

- Local Government, Personal Values, and Outreach Task


TurnUp Local Government, Personal Values, and Representative Outreach Task:

Overview:

- TurnUp would like to give interns and volunteers the chance to familiarize yourselves with your local government and representatives and explore your personal values in relation to your activism. We would like you to reflect upon your personal values and how they can be applied to your work at TurnUp. Finally you will have the opportunity to engage with a local representative.
- This is a chance to develop your research, writing, and communication skills while getting involved with your own community. We hope this task will create a pathway for you to further connect with and create change within your local community!

Instructions:

- For this task, we would like you to research your local government, get in contact with a local representative, and explore your personal values and how they have influenced you as an activist.
- Each team should create a Google Doc where team members can compile their research for the week.
- Before you begin, consider the following questions (feel free to discuss these questions during your team meeting):
 - How have you engaged with your local government in the past 6 months? If you are struggling to come up with answers, look at your environment. For instance, if outside you see streets, think about who keeps the streets clean or put stop signs up.
 - How have you engaged with your national government in the past 6 months?
 - What would an ideal interaction with your government look like to you?
 - How effective/relevant do you find current political engagement tactics (voting, protests, etc.)?

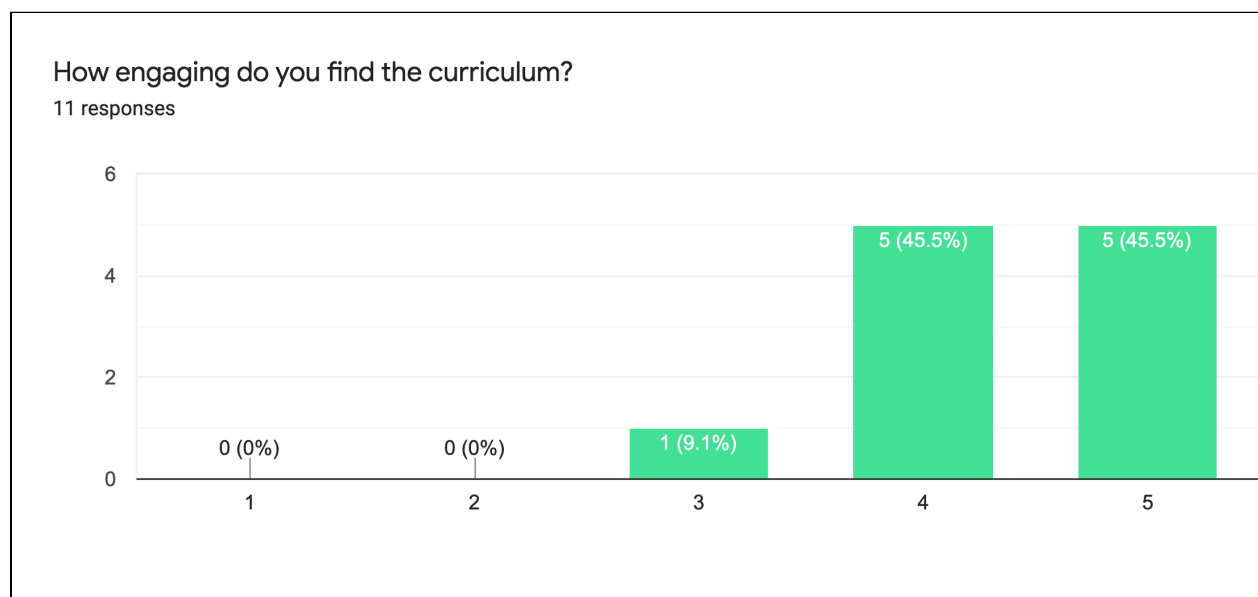
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- After you have completed your research, we would like you to reach out to a local representative about something you thought was interesting while researching, any questions you may have regarding your local government, or general comments or concerns. This can be done through email, letter, phone call, etc.
- Leaders**, please have your team members send you screenshots or photos of their communication with their local representative.
- In your second team meetings, we encourage you to share who the representative was that you contacted, and if you received a reply, what their response looked like.
- In addition to researching your local government, we would also like you to reflect upon the question: How do your personal values influence who you are as an activist and how can you apply them to your work at TurnUp? For example, how you conduct your research, what your beliefs are, how you choose to support your beliefs, etc.
 - Please write a short reflection in response to this question in your shared Google Doc alongside your local government and representative research.
 - In your meetings please feel free to share how your own personal values have impacted you and your thoughts on this question.

Here are some **research guidelines**:

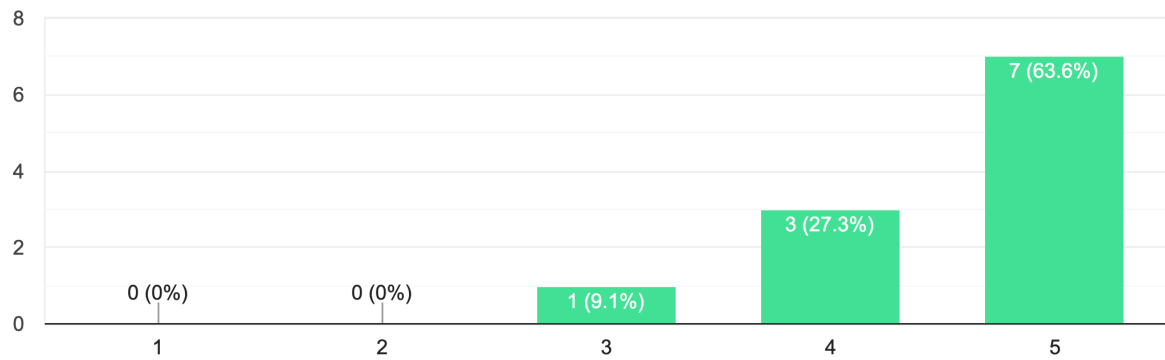
- When researching your local government and representative, please ensure that you have included:
 - A brief overview of your local government
 - Your local representative(s)
 - A policy or action your representative(s) have recently taken
 - How young people can engage with their representatives
- When looking into your local government, here are some helpful resources you can use:
 - [Meet the Mayor](#), a database of over 1,400 mayors from across the United States. You can search by city, state, or mayor's last name.
 - [County Explorer](#), a tool that provides easy access to data that offer a snapshot on a variety of topics relevant to counties nationwide.

Select Survey Results:



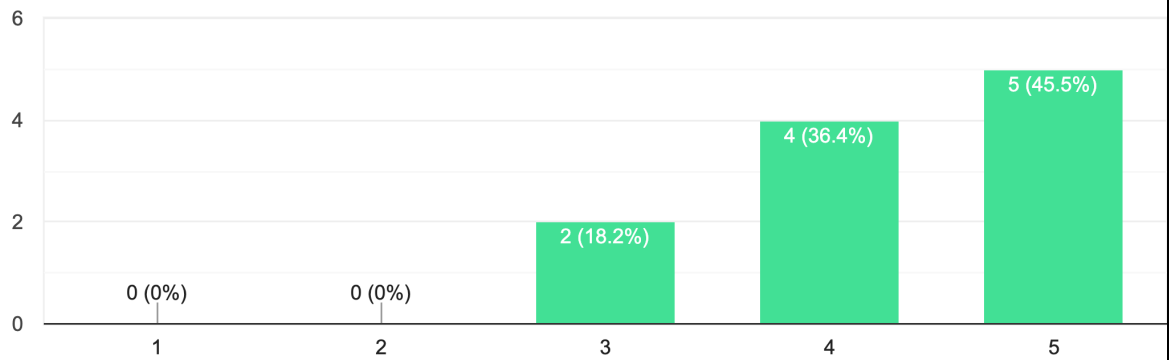
How suitable for TurnUp's structure and values do you find the curriculum?

11 responses



Do you see value in the curriculum?

11 responses



Internship Project Infographic:



Matching and Adapting YouthQuake Curriculum for TurnUp's Training Program

2021 INTERNSHIP

By: Michelle Li with mentor, Dr. Nancy Shapiro, TurnUp Board Chair

TurnUp Activism

TurnUp is a non-profit organization that focuses on empowering and connecting young activists through their training program and social networking application. As an intern, I had the opportunity to conduct research, engage in activism, and connect and collaborate with a hardworking team.





Business Project

My business project focuses on analyzing a curriculum presented to TurnUp by YouthQuake, an organization dedicated to educating students through a civics action program. I was tasked with matching suitable lesson modules, adapting the content to suit TurnUp's values, and creating task sheets detailing the final curriculum.

Learnings

After surveying the TurnUp community, current interns and volunteers found the adapted curriculum engaging and valuable. Constructive feedback included possible disorganization due to several research components, a need for further clarification within specific instructions, and challenges when communicating with outside organizations.





Internship Experience

Interning at TurnUp was an extremely unique and rewarding opportunity. I've developed a deeper understanding of thinking creatively and analytically to adapt and change a curriculum to suit a different structure and set of values. As an intern, I've also built skills like conducting research, writing reports, communicating and collaborating with my team members, and outreach.